

VZCZCXRO3055  
RR RUEHTRO  
DE RUEHNJ #1382/01 3341813  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 301813Z NOV 06  
FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4634  
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1323  
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 0432  
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0874  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0361  
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 0945  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1603  
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 2868  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2041  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0364  
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 1421  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0926

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 08 NDJAMENA 001382

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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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SUBJECT: CHADIAN ELECTIONS IN 2007

11. (SBU) Summary. The Chadian government estimates that the 2006 communal elections and the 2007 legislative elections will cost around \$11.65 million; and it has requested financial assistance from the US, France, Germany, the European Union, and the United Nations Development Program. The GOC has accepted the EU's offer to provide Euros five million toward reconstituting the electoral lists, revamping the independent election commission, and reworking the electoral code, along with a one-year experts' mission to establish an electoral timetable and benchmarks. President Deby is unlikely to want an independent legislature holding him to account as he fights for his life. The ruling party is comfortable with the perks of power. The political opposition detests Deby and does not believe there can be a fair election; convincing them otherwise will be a hard sell. Unresolved rebellion and communal violence in the East will militate against credibility. Nevertheless, the GOC's early start, the EU's plan, and the arrival of an activist EU ambassador give Chad a slim hope for a plausible legislative election. We should support these efforts. End Summary.

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The Election Request  
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12. (U) In a letter dated October 5, 2006, Chadian Prime Minister Pascal Yoadimnadjji requested aid from the United States, France, Germany, the European Union and the UNDP to

conduct communal (local) elections at the end of 2006 and legislative elections sometime in 2007, estimated to cost in excess of CFA 6 billion (\$11,650,000 at \$1 = CFA 515). The PM's aid estimate is based on costs for logistics, materials, equipment, documents, civic education, training for officials, redefining urban district boundaries, and updating voter lists.

13. (U) Separate studies funded by the UNDP and the EU concluded that the electoral process is broken; virtually no one outside the ruling party has confidence in it. Even the ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) acknowledges "problems". According to the studies, Chad needs:

--a population census (the last one dates from the early 90s) to which we plan to contribute \$150,000 in ESF;

--a complete reworking of the electoral lists (voter registration);

--new voter identification procedures;

--redistricting;

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--revamping of the electoral code;

--a permanent, trained, and truly Independent National Election Commission (CENI);

--comprehensive training for election officials down to the precinct level; and

--comprehensive and fair voter education.

The PM's request includes some, but not all, of these items.

14. (U) CENI is currently reconstituted for each election on an ad hoc basis. The government--which tends to install its partisans--controls the membership; and there is no permanent staff. There are competing proposals on how to reform the Commission, but all include representation by opposition parties and concerned civil society groups, as well as the creation of a permanent, "neutral" staff to provide expertise and continuity.

15. (U) There are also competing proposals for reform of the election code; but most independent observers agree that a revised law must include provision for a permanent CENI, provision for outside observers, an effective appeals procedure, and a ballot preservation/recount procedure.

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The Donor Response

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¶6. (U) The European Union, including the bilateral French and German missions, responded to the Prime Minister on October 12 with an offer of five million Euros to redo the electoral lists, overhaul the electoral code, and reconstitute CENI. The EU-proposal, which the GOC accepted on November 3, would focus on the 2007 National Assembly elections and ignore the 2006 communal elections. (Although the EU believes that the time is too short to organize successful communal elections before the end of 2006 and sees merit in postponing them, it also does not consider them significant given the predominantly rural character of the Chadian population.) Upon acceptance of its proposal by the Prime Minister, the EU would dispatch an "experts team" to Chad to determine an electoral calendar, establish milestones, and monitor reform progress.

¶7. (SBU) In a November 3 meeting with the US, German, and French embassies, the EU mission, and the UNDP, former French Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot explained EU (plus German and French) thinking on Chadian election reform.

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Essentially, the EU would fund reforms on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. The opposition would be encouraged to accede, but the reforms would go forward whether they bought-in or not. This yes/no approach represents a break from earlier attempts to craft an electoral system acceptable to both the government and the opposition. Previously, there was hope to gain acceptance of each step in the process by both sides. The EU's current approach can be read as dissatisfaction with both the Chadian government and the political opposition, a frustration palpable in the former French Ambassador's forceful presentation. The EU urged the donor community to support its approach and not allow the GOC to play the donors against each other.

¶8. (U) In a letter dated November 3 to the EU, the Prime Minister accepted the EU's proposal.

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The Chadian Players

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¶9. (U) President Deby's Patriotic Salvation Movement controls 123 of the 155 seats in the National Assembly (NA). Allied parties control 6 seats. Three opposition groupings control 26 seats.

THE PATRIOTIC SALVATION MOVEMENT  
(MPS)

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¶10. (SBU) The MPS assures Deby's dominance of the legislative branch of the Chadian government. While the NA may occasionally question a minister, it never challenges Deby himself or his priority programs and, in the end, never seriously threatens a minister. The Chadian legislature under the MPS is the quintessential rubber-stamp.

¶11. (U) With backing from Libya and Sudan, President Deby founded the MPS in 1989 as the vehicle for his revolt against Hissene Habre. Today, the MPS has transformed into Chad's most diverse political party, garnering representation and support from all regions of the country. While Muslims form its backbone, the party has a solid cadre in Christian areas.

¶12. (SBU) Virtually all observers agree that President Deby and his MPS are unwilling to risk losing control of the National Assembly. While the party's national base would almost guarantee its continued control of the legislature, the national power structure is probably unwilling to risk any significant diminution of its power, especially with the regime facing rebellion in the East. Additionally, MPS adherents may simply not be prepared for a stiff contest in a transparent environment.

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UNDP Director Kingsley Amaning posits Chad's MPS as an amalgamation of three groups:

--Warriors. This group stems from the ancient and pragmatic tradition of desert warfare. The warriors would accept political and electoral reforms but would insist that they (the MPS) retain power, despite the reforms.

--Semi-activists. This is the second-level power structure, the secretaries general, the party's

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water carriers. They lack a culture of competition. They know that they are next in line to feed at the power trough, and they do not want to gamble their future fortunes on the whims of an electorate.

--Techno-bureaucrats. These are the militants who hold the patronage jobs, and want to keep them. They have never faced any real competition and are clueless about running a competitive political campaign. They are risk-averse and comfortable with the status quo.

In essence, the MPS has no interest in free, fair, and transparent

elections.

#### THE OPPOSITION

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¶13. (U) Chad's 36 opposition parties have two things in common: a profound distrust of President Deby and a desire for power. In the estimation of many of these leaders, Deby has variously destroyed the Chadian state, fomented the Darfur crisis, plundered the treasury, and repressed the masses. He can do no good, according to them; and he will steal the National Assembly in 2007.

¶14. (U) Many of the political opposition parties are regionally or ethnically based. Some are formed around a particular individual who, in many instances, has previously served in the Deby regime. Most have no vision for Chad other than to begin a national dialogue among the various actors, including the eastern rebels. The goal of such a conference, they say, would be to develop a framework for transparent elections, reform the military and security services, and reform the justice system and public sector finance.

¶15. (U) The opposition can be separated into two groups: Those who competed for the National Assembly in the 2002 elections and those who boycotted.

--The joiners. Five parties split the 26 opposition seats with ten going to the Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), nine to the Front for

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the Action Forces for the Republic (FAR), two to parties allied to FAR, and five to the National Union for Democracy and Renewal (UNDR). The leaders of the RDP and the FAR (19 seats) have indicated that they are dissatisfied with the NA, calling it a useless and powerless institution. As things stand, both leaders plan to have their parties boycott the 2007 elections. At this time, the UNDR appears ready to compete. The views of the two one-seat parties are unknown.

--The boycotters. The Coordination of Political Parties for Defense of the Constitution (CPDC) is the umbrella organization for 28 opposition parties (including the non-boycotting UNDR). With the exception of UNDR, it currently appears that most of the CPDC members plan to continue their boycott in 2007. Like the RDP and the FAR, the leaders of these parties see the NA as nothing more than a rubber-stamp for President Deby; and they are convinced that Deby and the MPS will steal their way to victory.

OPPOSITION PARTICIPATION IN THE 2007  
ELECTIONS?

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¶16. (SBU) At least some of the opposition party leaders, however, might be open to eventual participation in the upcoming legislative election, should "real" reform take place. Poloff spoke to the major party leaders individually, away from their opposition homologues and the shell of the CPDC, and asked them if EU-type proposals would encourage them to participate. Salibou Garba of the National Alliance for Democracy and Development and Lol Mahamat Choua of the RDP (currently in the NA) indicated that they would consider taking part in the 2007 contest if the international donor community could guarantee meaningful reforms along the lines posed by the EU. They would want to examine the reforms, however, before they committed; and they would want to scrutinize the international community's transparency guarantees. In the end, they believe that Deby will find a way to steal the election; and convincing them otherwise will be a hard sell.

¶17. (SBU) Other parties indicated openness to participation but attached conditions exceeding the EU proposals. A national dialogue in advance of the elections was the favorite. A guarantee of Deby's retirement at the end of his current term was another. Demonstrating that it was impossible for Deby to circumvent the reforms was a third. In essence, profound distrust of Deby may negate any goodwill generated

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from international donor community-backed reforms. FAR leader Yorongar simply stated "[participating] is not worth the trouble".

THE PRESIDENT  
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¶18. (U) President Deby is the locus of politics in Chad and the "bete noir" of the opposition. He has held power for 16 years and has been elected three times. He changed the constitution to permit himself a third term, a tarnished election in the view of most international observers. The international community, the political and rebel oppositions, and probably most Chadians believe that President Deby intends to remain president for life.

¶19. (U) According to observers, President Deby views himself as a desert warrior chief who almost certainly believes no one can rule Chad better than he. He appears to

take counsel from no one. Due to the insurgency in the East and communal violence along the border with Sudan, Deby is presently detached from the everyday concerns of government and the non-military needs of his country. He is fighting for his political life--and perhaps his physical life too.

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The Probability  
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¶20. (U) Despite the best efforts of the international donor community, free, fair, and transparent legislative elections will be extremely difficult to pull off in ¶2007.

¶21. (U) President Deby has no interest in permitting a legislative body that could oppose his plans, question his priorities and his use of state money, or undercut his efforts in the East. The MPS has no interest in jeopardizing the employment of its adherents and the privileges of rank. The opposition has no interest in legitimizing what it believes will be a fraudulent MPS victory. The EU and the international community ultimately cannot guarantee the sanctity of the ballot box in the absence of the government's unwillingness to cede power.

¶22. (U) Exacerbating electoral credibility are the security situation in the East and the implementation of press censorship. Rebellion and communal violence in the East have resulted in tens of thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) whom it will be extremely difficult to keep track of as election day approaches. The Chadian military and security forces,

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already stretched thin along the eastern and southern borders, would be hard pressed to provide security at every polling station or offer even modest assurances of safety for international observers in the border regions. Finally, the provision for press censorship banning reports on rebel activities and communal violence contained in the current State of Emergency--which the National Assembly extended on November 24 for six months--would make it impossible for the opposition to discuss issues that could reasonably be expected to play a major role in a national legislative election.

¶23. (U) Given the current power structure's incentives to retain power and the difficulty inherent in conducting free, fair, and transparent elections in a censored



and volatile environment, the GOC would find it extremely difficult to conduct elections meeting even minimal international standards of credibility.

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The Possibility  
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¶24. (U) Nonetheless, there is a possibility. The Chadian government has begun preparing for the legislative elections almost a year in advance, which represents a significant improvement in its planning process. The European Union, with the full backing of the French and German bilateral missions, has committed significant funding to the electoral process, as well as a plan that the EU believes will provide institutional backbone for a transparent election. The European Commission's new Ambassador to Chad, Gilles Desesquelles, recently arrived from Togo where he participated in the effort to reform that country's election process, is committed to pushing the plan forward in cooperation with the donor community. The Chadian Prime Minister has accepted the European plan on behalf of the government. Some Chadian opposition party leaders have indicated a qualified willingness to participate in the legislative elections if certain reforms are implemented.

¶25. (U) Settling the framework and finances for the NA election gives the EU's experts time to develop voter registration procedures, electoral code changes, and a structure for the election commission that is acceptable to reasonable observers. The experts' electoral timetable and progress indicators will give the international donor community and the opposition objective milestones by which to measure the government's headway--and

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commitment to reform.

¶26. (U) Although prospects for a free, fair, and transparent vote next year remain unlikely, the convergence of the GOC's unexpectedly early planning process, the EU's well-funded plan, and the arrival of an allied ambassador with experience in problematic electoral environments gives Chad a slim chance for a somewhat more credible process in ¶2007. To the extent these reforms can be implemented, this will make it harder to manipulate the electoral process during the presidential elections in 2011. While avoiding any false hopes of rapid progress, we nonetheless believe we should support efforts for electoral reform in Chad next year and urge that resources be



made available to allow us to do so.

¶27. (U) Tripoli minimize  
considered.

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